R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 016 481 JC 670 997

THE CATHOLIC JUNIOR COLLEGE--PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS IN THE CHANGING EDUCATIONAL SCENE.

BY- BERG, MOTHER M. MAJELLA

PUB DATE AUG 65

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.32 6P.

DESCRIPTORS- *JUNIOR COLLEGES, *CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, *CHURCH RELATED COLLEGES, COLLEGE ROLE,

IN 1965, OF THE 68 CATHOLIC 2-YEAR COLLEGES, 48 WERE DEVOTED SOLELY TO PREPARATION FOR PRIESTHOOD OR THE RELIGIOUS LIFE, 17 WERE PRIVATE LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES, AND ONLY THREE WERE COMMUNITY COLLEGES. LIMITED CATHOLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE JUNIOR COLLEGE MOVEMENT IS DUE TO (1) LACK OF GOOD COUNSELING IN HIGH SCHOOLS, (2) STUDENTS' LOW APPRAISAL OF THEIR OWN ABILITIES, (4) SIMILAR LACK OF SELF-ESTEEM AMONG THE FACULTY, RESULTING IN POOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION, AND (5) A PREFERENCE FOR THE COLLEGE TO BECOME A WEAK 4-YEAR INSTITUTION INSTEAD OF A STRONG 2-YEAR ONE. THESE CONDITIONS COULD BE ALLEVIATED BY (1) A MORE REALISTIC SYSTEM OF GRADING STUDENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, (2) EDUCATION OF THE CONSTITUENCY TO THE NEED FOR RELATING THE COLLEGE'S GOALS TO THE MAINSTREAM OF THE JUNIOR COLLEGE MOVEMENT, AND (3) AN ANALYSIS OF THE COLLEGE'S PARTICULAR STUDENT AND FACULTY RESOURCES. THESE CORRECTIONS WOULD RESULT IN AN IMPROVED IMAGE OF THE CATHOLIC COLLEGE, RECOGNITION OF ITS CONTRIBUTIONS, ACCEPTANCE OF ITS GRADUATES BY 4-YEAR COLLEGES, AND, CONSEQUENTLY, MORE STUDENTS. THE SMALL LIBERAL ARTS JUNIOR COLLEGE MUST MAINTAIN ITS PARTICULAR DISTINCTION BY (1) EMPHASIS ON SUPERIOR TEACHING, (2) A STRONG GUIDANCE PROGRAM, (3) ENCOURAGING LEADERSHIP QUALITIES IN THE STUDENTS, (4) PERFORMING A VALUABLE SCREENING SERVICE FOR THE 4-YEAR INSTITUTION. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN THE "NATIONAL CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION BULLETIN," VOLUME 62, NUMBER 1, AUGUST 1965. (HH)

ED016481

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ERIC

The Catholic Junior College: Problems and Prospects in the Changing Educational Scene

MOTHER M. MAJELLA BERG, R.S.H.M.
President, Marymount College, Arlington, Virginia

THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT that these are days of rapid change, social, scientific, and technological. Needless to say, there are changes on the educational scene. In addition to the demand for higher education caused by the increased number of people (I am sure that all of you have heard many times that by 1975 the U.S. median age will be 25.9), there is a greater appreciation for education and a greater amount of leisure time in which to pursue it. Furthermore, the need for basic liberal arts as a preparation for *continuing education*, which is fast becoming part of successful living, is growing in direct proportion to the complexity of our society.

The junior college, an institution unique to the United States, dates back to 1890 and obviously is a much more recent type of institution than the four-year liberal arts college or the university, which in this country were in existence in colonial times.

The traditional independent or church-related junior colleges, such as those featured in the *New York Times Supplement* of March 7, have been serving American higher education successfully, principally in the eastern states, for many years, while the large, comprehensive, community-type junior colleges have been growing at a phenomenal pace, especially in recent years. States have been discussing "master plans," modeled on those of California, Florida, and Texas.

The history of the Catholic junior college is in sharp contrast to this rapid growth of two-year colleges throughout the United States and even of systems in other parts of the world which owe their inspiration to the American junior college.

Despite the growth of Catholic institutions at other levels, in the area of junior college education there has been a serious lag. According to the *Junior College Directory*, published in January 1965, there are 68 Catholic two-year colleges. Of these, 70 percent serve only young men and women preparing for the priesthood or the religious life. Of the remaining 20, three are community-type junior colleges. The remaining 17 are private colleges which accommodate, according to the same directory, a mere 5,000 students.

Since Catholic higher education appears to be out of step with American

JC 670 997

National Catholic Educational Association Bulletin,
Volume 62, Number 1, August, 1965.

higher education in regard to the junior college, perhaps a look at the problems of the two-year college will offer some insight into the reasons for this.

Problem areas include:

1. A general lack of understanding of the goals of the two-year college by administrators, faculty members and students at four-year institutions; administrators as well as faculty members, students and even some guidance officers in the secondary schools; parents and students.

2. A lack of understanding of the philosophy of the two-year college and a dearth of enthusiasm for its work on the part of some faculty members in the junior college itself.

3. Students in the two-year colleges frequently make inaccurate appraisals of their talents and capabilities as a result of this lack of understanding.

4. Generalizations including all two-year colleges (without distinguishing between "open-door" institutions and those which screen) tend to blur the public's view of this significant type of institution.

5. The tendency on the part of some two-year colleges to panic because of one or more of these problems, and to become weak four-year colleges, compounds the difficulties.

Goals of Junior Colleges

Perhaps a consideration of the characteristic goals of junior college education will be of value in considering the problems and prospects of junior colleges.

Programs at junior colleges vary greatly, from the open-door community colleges, located mainly in urban areas, which afford an opportunity for training in skills as well as basic education, to the independent two-year colleges which are pledged to assist their students in reaching their individual potential through superior teaching and guidance.

The admissions committees at the latter institutions insist on a least a minimum of selectivity. This requirement is based on the conviction that if the education provided at their colleges is to be identified as "higher education," the students enrolled should possess the skills necessary to master college-level courses.

In addition, these colleges maintain that there should be corrective measures for correctable deficiencies, especially reading inadequacies, communication difficulties—oral as well as written—a lack of motivation and study skills.

Since this type of college is aware of the fact that one of the fundamental goals of higher education is the sharpening of the critical and analytical function of the mind, efforts are made to achieve this. Many admit adults, many conduct evening sessions, and most provide some type of cultural program to which the local community is invited.

There are terminal programs which are completed at the end of two years, as well as those programs which provide the basic general education designed for transfer—be it to liberal arts colleges, schools of education, business administration, or one of the health service baccalaureate degree programs, such as nursing or physical therapy.

The two-year community-type junior college fulfills the needs of a large number of individuals, including those who cannot afford high tuition charges and those who have to work part time in order to finance their education. Catholic educators are far behind in servicing these groups. Donnelly College

in Kansas City, Kansas, founded in 1949, with a current enrollment of 650, appears to be the first modern community-type junior college under Catholic auspices. The *AAJC* 1965 *Guide* includes two others of this type, Springfield Junior College in Illinois, and St. Joseph College in Vermont. When one considers that there are 452 publicly supported institutions in the same listing, including a total enrollment of 343,846, a conclusion may be drawn that the Catholic contribution to this growing field is very limited.

Those vitally concerned with the overview of Catholic education in the United States are wondering why Catholic educators are not concerning themselves with pressure of numbers. They are asking what Catholic educators are doing for those who cannot afford to attend college away from home and whose needs are not being met by liberal arts education, since their interest is in a two-year vocational program or because they do not as yet qualify for a baccalaureate degree program.

Among the smaller independent junior colleges the 17 Catholic institutions listed in the directory have a total enrollment of approximately 5,000. These private colleges include some that restrict their efforts almost entirely to terminal programs, others that serve students in preparing to tranfer, and still others whose enrollments are divided between transfer and terminal programs.

To be sure, this illustrates diversity to an extent which makes it clear that there is no simple definition of the role of the Catholic junior college.

Lack of Understanding by Four-Year Colleges

Perhaps one of the most serious problems for the Catholic two-year college is the lack of understanding of its role by administrators, faculty members, and students at four-year institutions. This is of necessity very closely related to an important feature of the two-year college—articulation with four-year institutions on behalf of its transfer students.

There are administrators who seem not to attempt to recognize the philosophy and purpose of the two-year college nor the contribution it is making to American higher education. Among these administrators are presidents and academic deans whose condescending attitude would indicate that their objecive is to build their colleges' prestige by demeaning the graduates of the junior colleges who apply for transfer.

There are admissions officers who make statements such as, "We rejected you two years ago. Why are you coming back again?" There are department heads and faculty members who refuse to grant credit for courses without an examination of syllabi, objectives or content, *simply* because the course was taken at a junior college or *simply* because there is no course comparable to it offered at their institutions—rather than for a genuinely justifiable reason. A student is sometimes required to repeat a course or to take an additional one in a discipline of basic education, despite the fact that it is in no way directly related to his major interest, in order to accommodate the registrar's bookkeeping.

There are even faculty members who jeer at two-year college graduates and who confess quite bluntly that all they know about a junior college is that it is for inferior students, those who could not be admitted to a four-year program.

This lack of understanding on the part of four-year institutions presents a serious problem to the two-year colleges, the test of whose efforts depends to some extent on successful articulation with other institutions of learning.

Lack of Understanding by Secondary Schools

The lack of understanding on the part of secondary school administrators, guidance officers, faculty members, and students present problem number two. The attitudes of high school guidance personnel have in some areas shown improvement within the past few years, when the volume of students seeking higher education has grown and the pressures from parents for the admission of their sons and daughters to institutions of higher learning have been great. Guidance officers, often on the firing line, have looked into the value of the two-year college programs and have made some attempts to persuade parents and students of their value.

Perhaps on the high school level it is faculty members who are in the greatest need of education in this area. Statements such as, "If you can't go anywhere else, why don't you try a junior college?" do a great deal of harm to the image of the two-year college in the minds of the student and his parents. I do not believe that there is anyone here who would not readily recognize the havoc this kind of statement can raise.

Other Problems

Unfortunately, generalizations of this kind which include all two-year colleges without distinguishing between open-door institutions and those which screen in order to preserve their identity as institutions of higher education can be very unjust and cause serious harm to sincere efforts on the part of dedicated educators who are contributing greatly to the cause of American youth. As a result of this unfortunate image, projected by those who are not informed, and who have not attempted to understand the role or objectives of the two-year college, two additional problems face the junior colleges:

1. Students often form an unrealistically low appraisal of their talents and capabilities. They suffer from an inferiority complex which stifles intellectual and moral growth. Their parents, too, are apologetic about the fact that these children are *only* capable of entering a junior college.

2. Faculty members at the two-year colleges tend to suffer from the same inferiority complex. If the role of the junior college is so little understood that even teachers are considered inferior to their colleagues who are performing virtually the same service at four-year institutions, the results for the two-year college can be disastrous. Since the junior colleges are institutions where the emphasis is on superior teaching, recruitment and retention of faculty members is and will continue to be an evermore serious problem as the number of students in higher education grows. If the image of the junior college faculty member is such that it classifies instructors as inferior, two-year colleges can expect in the future to have their faculty composed mainly of (a) inferior teachers who were not able to find employment at four-year institutions; (b) those who are stopping temporarily to gain experience in college teaching; and (c) those who need to earn money while working for a higher degree.

This would hardly provide the superior instruction which is one of the objectives of junior college education.

One of the most serious results of these problems is the fact that some junior colleges, as a result of the pressures of one or more of these problems, join the ranks of the already too-large group of weak four-year colleges.

Problems have been identified, therefore, with regard to the understanding or lack of understanding of the role of the junior college; the effects of this understanding or lack of it on colleges and high school constituencies; and the subsequent effects on the recognition of student success, on faculty recruitment and retention, as well as on the unfortunate loss of distinguished service to higher education when two-year colleges. though unprepared, become four-year institutions.

Prospects Brighter?

Since our topic includes prospects, let us turn our attention now from the problems area to the brighter side. What can be expected? What could be accomplished if the lack of understanding which causes the problems were altered to clear-sighted cooperation?

The role of the two-year college, be it large or small, a community-type or high-tuition private institution, must be clearly understood first by the members of the individual institution's constituency. Each two-year college must understand its own particular philosophy in the light of the larger picture. Goals for each curriculum must be planned. The function of each course in the attainment of these goals must be studied in an attempt to understand the entire unified effort. The place of the core curriculum, as well as the extraclass life and guidance procedures which are characteristic of two-year colleges, must be understood. The characteristics of the student body—the strengths of the students as well as their weaknesses—must be studied. An attempt must be made to discover causes of weaknesses with a view toward combating them, and the colleges must examine the means of developing students' talents to the fullest.

A realistic system of grading students' accomplishments, so that interpretation of grades will be reliable for those who have to form judgments of these students, must be devised where it does not exist.

Catholic junior colleges who hope to fulfill their distinguished role in American higher education have to assume the first responsibility for defining realistic goals and for educating their entire constituencies to their meaning in the light of two-year college education in the United States. Programs and courses which are in keeping with these goals, programs for which there is sufficient demand to make them economically possible, and programs for which there are available the resources necessary for doing a creditable job must be offered.

Analyses by individual colleges will undoubtedly reveal the individual resources available for faculty and student interests. If work is carried on in the light of the role of the two-year college, a sound base will be established in the Catholic junior college. Economic waste resulting from meaningless proliferation of courses will be cut, and institutional research, so necessary for standard quality of education, will be encouraged.

From this improved situation, the "image" of the Catholic two-year college as well as that of its faculty and student body, will be transformed, and its contribution to American youth will be recognized.

Four-year college administrators, recognizing the economic advisability as well as other benefits which result, will be recruiting students for their junior year, thus providing additional numbers at a time when the class divides into major fields of concentration. In this way, classes for majors can be filled, and additional variety can be offered without additional faculty cost.

Consequently, applicants who have not yet proved themselves will be advised to take advantage of a junior college program for their freshman and sophomore years and to apply for admission to the junior year of the four-year college.

What should be distinct with regard to a liberal arts transfer program at a junior college when compared with the first two years of a four-year college?

According to many, the two-year college has been distinguished from the four-year college and the university *by great concentration* on superior teaching rather than on research. To be sure, there is little possibility of superior teaching without an interest in institutional research and methods of scholarship and instruction. In the junior college, classes are conducted by qualified instructors, not by graduate assistants. Moreover, the absentee scholar difficulty is not a likely problem.

I think we all agree that smaller liberal arts colleges also are not likely to have graduate assistants conducting their classes. Nor is the scholar-teacher of unusual repute a universal presence on their campuses. These colleges, by working with a limited number of qualified freshman students and confining the screening and developing of the potential of the others to the junior colleges with a plan to accept those who qualify as juniors, will provide greater stimulus to superior teaching by improving the quality of their major fields.

1. To preserve this distinguishing characteristic of *superior teaching*, recruitment of dedicated, enthusiastic faculty members is very important. If such skilled faculty members are to be retained in the junior college, it is necessary that even those with exceptional qualifications be stimulated by emphasis on opportunities for creative teaching and that opportunities for research in their discipline be provided.

2. Guidance programs are also very important. Since many students come to the junior college because they are not sure what they want, there is need for a strong guidance program.

3. Since there are no upperclassmen on campus there is a far greater opportunity for leadership roles. Freshmen become campus leaders at the end of one year.

4. The proverbial "sophomore slump" with its resulting lethargy does not occur on the two-year college campus—sophomores are busy getting ready for graduation. This can have a very salutary effect on the quality of the performance.

The two-year college can perform a valuable screening service for the four-year institution with superior testing and guidance programs, together with emphasis on superior teaching and encouragement of scholarship and leadership. Students who complete this course successfully can be recommended wholeheartedly.

Perhaps it may be concluded that while there are problems in the two-year college world and challenges which have not as yet been met, there is a decided role in Catholic higher education in the United States for the junior college. Can or will those who are sincerely interested in the cause of American youth neglect to consider this role seriously?